

**Patent Application Serial No. 09/886,714
Amendment dated September 2, 2004
Response to Office Action of June 2, 2004**

In the Claims

Claims 1-34 are cancelled.

New claims 39-63 are entered.

No claims have been amended herein.

1-34. (Cancelled)

35. (Previously presented) An article centering and severing device, comprising:
- a treadle including a web guide plate and a guide strip;
 - a web conveyor having a drive wheel and a co-rotating follower wheel to move a web therebetween; and
 - a knock lever mechanism having a knock lever arm configured to carry at least one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel, the knock lever arm configured to engage a platen as the treadle is moved relative to the platen during a severing operation so as to open up a gap between the drive wheel and the follower wheel and release a respective edge of the web during the severing operation to ensure further centering of the web;
- wherein the guide strip is provided in close proximity with the web guide plate relative to article apertures in the web guide plate to ensure alignment and positioning of the web and articles carried by the web.

Patent Application Serial No. 09/688,714
Amendment dated September 2, 2004
Response to Office Action of June 2, 2004

36. (Previously presented) The device of claim 35, further comprising individual punches and corresponding die members, wherein the further centering of the web depends on contour features of the individual punches configured to coact in combination with shape of in-molded articles in the web to laterally further align the articles relative to each respective punch and the corresponding die members.

37. (Previously presented) An article centering and severing device, comprising:
a treadle including a web guide plate and a guide strip;
a web conveyor having a drive wheel and a co-rotating follower wheel to move a web therebetween; and

a pair of knock lever mechanisms with individual knock lever mechanisms provided on each edge of the treadle adjacent each respective edge of a web carried therebetween, the individual knock lever mechanism having a knock lever arm configured to carry at least one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel, the knock lever arm configured to engage a platen as the treadle is moved relative to the platen during a severing operation so as to release a respective edge of the web during the severing operation to ensure further centering of the web;

wherein the guide strip is provided in close proximity with the web guide plate relative to article apertures in the web guide plate to ensure alignment and positioning of the web and articles carried by the web.

Patent Application Serial No. 09/686,714
Amendment dated September 2, 2004
Response to Office Action of June 2, 2004

38. (Previously presented) The device of claim 35, wherein the gap between the drive wheel and the follower wheel is opened just prior to severing of an article carried by the web to enable the alignment and the positioning of the web and the article.

39. (New) The device of claim 35 wherein the web conveyor further comprises a drive motor configured to drive the drive wheel in rotation.

40. (New) The device of claim 35 wherein the knock lever mechanism comprises a kinematic linkage having a center pivot, wherein the knock lever arm is carried at one end of the kinematic linkage and the drive wheel is carried at an opposite end of the kinematic linkage.

41. (New) The device of claim 35 wherein a pair of knock lever mechanisms are provided, a first of the knock lever mechanisms provided on a first edge of the treadle adjacent a respective edge of a web carried therebetween, and a second of the knock lever mechanisms provided on another edge of the treadle adjacent a respective edge of the web carried therebetween.

42. (New) The device of claim 35 wherein the treadle includes a pair of guide strips spaced apart from one another.

Patent Application Serial No. 09/686,714
Amendment dated September 2, 2004
Response to Office Action of June 2, 2004

43. (New) The device of claim 42 wherein one of the guide strips is provided in close proximity with the web guide plate and another of the guide strips is provided in spaced-apart proximity with the web guide plate relative to proximity of the first guide strip and the web guide plate.

44. (New) The device of claim 43 wherein the one guide strip is positioned relative to the web guide plate so as to provide a gap between the one guide strip and the web guide plate in the range of 1-3.5 thicknesses of a web of material that is to be received and processed therebetween.

45. (New) The device of claim 44 wherein the another guide strip is positioned relative to the web guide plate so as to provide a gap between the another guide strip and the web guide plate of a minimum of at least 3.5 thicknesses of a web of material that is to be received and processed therebetween.

46. (New) The device of claim 43 wherein the first guide strip comprises a primary guide member and the second guide strip comprises a secondary guide member.

47. (New) The device of claim 35 wherein the treadle comprises a clamp bar configured to removably support the guide strip.

Patent Application Serial No. 09/686,714
Amendment dated September 2, 2004
Response to Office Action of June 2, 2004

48. (New) The device of claim 47 wherein the treadle comprises a frame, and further comprising an attachment plate configured to support the clamp bar and the guide strip from the frame of the treadle.

49. (New) The device of claim 48, further comprising a quick release adjustment collar, the frame comprises at least one tie rod configured to receive the collar for adjustable positioning there along to enable adjustable positioning of the guide strip relative to the frame.

50. (New) The device of claim 35 wherein the drive wheel comprises an aluminum drive wheel having a knurled radial outer circumferential surface.

51. (New) The device of claim 35 wherein the follower wheel comprises a plastic wheel formed from a high density polyethylene plastic material.

52. (New) The device of claim 37 wherein the guide strip is provided proximate the web guide plate and between a pair of article apertures in the web guide plate.

53. (New) The device of claim 37 wherein the guide strip of the treadle comprises a first guide strip, and further comprising a second guide strip spaced apart laterally from the first guide strip.

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Patent Application Serial No. 09/686,714
Amendment dated September 2, 2004
Response to Office Action of June 2, 2004

54. (New) The device of claim 53 wherein the first guide strip is provided between a first pair of article apertures and a second guide strip is provided between a second pair of article apertures.

55. (New) The device of claim 53 wherein the second guide strip is spaced apart from the web guide plate a substantially greater distance than the distance between the first guide strip and the web guide plate.

56. (New) The device of claim 55 wherein the first guide strip is positioned relative to the web guide plate to provide a gap in the range of 1-3.5 thicknesses of a web of material being received therebetween.

57. (New) The device of claim 55 wherein the second guide strip is supported relative to the web guide plate so as to provide a minimum gap of at least 3.5 thicknesses of a web of material to be received therebetween.

58. (New) The device of claim 37 wherein the web guide strip is releasably retained by the treadle to facilitate assembly and disassembly.

**Patent Application Serial No. 09/686,714
Amendment dated September 2, 2004
Response to Office Action of June 2, 2004**

59. (New) The device of claim 58 wherein the guide strip is removably supported by a clamp bar of the treadle.

60. (New) The device of claim 59, further comprising an attachment plate configured to support the clamp bar and the guide strip.

61. (New) The device of claim 60 wherein the treadle further comprises a frame and an adjustment collar, the adjustment collar configured to adjustably support the attachment plate, the clamp bar, and the guide strip for a lateral positioning relative to the frame in relation to the article apertures in the web guide plate.

62. (New) The device of claim 37 wherein the drive wheel has a roughened drive surface.

63. (New) The device of claim 37 wherein the web conveyor further comprises a servo drive motor configured to drive the drive wheel in rotation so as to move a web between the drive wheel and the co-rotating follower wheel.